

The Wantagh Community

Wantagh is a suburban community located about 40 minutes from NYC on the south shore of Long Island. Known as "The Gateway to Jones Beach," Wantagh is a community that prides itself on its rich traditions and history. A local historical association works to preserve and protect significant landmarks, while a wide range of organizations dedicate themselves to community service.

Wantagh is also known as "The Blue Ribbon District" because each of its three elementary and two secondary schools has been designated as a "United States Department of Education Blue Ribbon School of Excellence."

The majority of the housing in the community is comprised of single family detached homes, while some condominiums and apartments exist. Wantagh is bounded by Levittown on the north, Seaford on the east, Bellmore on the west, and the Atlantic Ocean on the south. Jones Beach and parts of Cedar Creek Park are included within the boundaries of the community. Wantagh is served by the Long Island Railroad and Metropolitan Bus Lines and is easily accessible by Wantagh Parkway, Seaford Oyster Bay Expressway and Southern State Parkway. Since there is no major industry in the area, most people commute to work.

The community is relatively stable, with many second and third generations of the same family now in the schools. In fact, there are a number of staff members in the schools who are graduates of Wantagh High School. Like most suburban districts of our size, our student population had increased over the past ten years but has recently begun to level off as the older members of the community retire and relocate, selling their houses to younger families with children.

The current student population of the district is a little over 3,700 children. The students attend one of three K-5 neighborhood elementary schools. Forest Lake and Mandalay are relatively equal in size with about 400 students in each. Wantagh Elementary School, the oldest of the three is about double the size. All students then enter the middle and secondary school complex. The middle school houses grades 6-8 and the high school has grades 9-12.

The school district budget is about \$63,000,000, most raised from local property taxes. Wantagh does qualify as a high tax, low wealth district and has fought for many years to attain greater amounts of state aid. We generally do not qualify for Title I monies; however, we have been one of approximately seventy five school districts in the State to receive a New York State Teacher Mentor Grant for the last eight years.

The school district has a five-member Board of Education who makes policy. The district has a Superintendent, two Assistant Superintendents (one for business and one for Curriculum, Instruction, and Personnel), a principal for each building, one assistant principal for the high school and one each for Wantagh Middle and Wantagh Elementary Schools. There are district directors for Pupil Personnel, Guidance, Information Systems and Instructional Technology, Physical Education, Health, and Athletics, and Science and Technology, and supervisors in art, business education, discipline, English, family and consumer sciences, foreign language, math, reading and social studies who have K-12 positions which include teaching.

The Wantagh School District prides itself on the strong bonds it holds with the community of which it is such a vital part. A community-based Wantagh Foundation for Educational Excellence supports programs that enhance public education. Among the Foundation's many activities are summer enrichment programs for both elementary and secondary students, and "Teen Center" programs for middle school and high school students that provide supervised, recreational activities two Fridays each month. The Foundation is also forming a Wantagh High School Alumni Association which will help to ensure that graduates remain a vital part of the life of the district.